CLAIMS

1 - 4 (cancelled).

5. (Currently Amended) A method of ~~producing~~ cleaning an optical fiber ~~as defined in claim 4, wherein~~

comprising:

disposing a cleaning member on an optical fiber moving path, wherein the cleaning member is a mesh member of a soft and flexible fiber sheet formed by knitting fiber threads and the fiber sheet satisfies the relation F [[=]] $\geq$ 0.01 (mm) and G [[=]] $\leq 0.8 \times D$ in which D denotes the outer diameter of the optical fiber, G denotes the mesh size of the fiber thread and F denotes the diameter of the fiber thread,

bringing a surface of the moving optical fiber into a physical contact with the cleaning member for cleaning the surface of the moving optical fiber, and

inserting the optical fiber into an interstice of the fiber sheet.

6. (Currently Amended) A method of producing an optical fiber as defined in claim [[4]] 5, wherein a plurality of fiber sheets are laminated in a moving direction of the optical fiber.

7. (Currently Amended) A method of producing an optical fiber as defined in claim 6, wherein the number of the laminated fiber sheets is preset to establish the relation "L [[=]] $\leq 54 \times T - 3.4$" in which L (km) denotes the length of the optical fiber to be cleaned and T (mm) denotes the thickness of the laminated fiber sheets.

8. (Currently Amended) A method of producing an optical fiber as defined in claim [[1]] 5, wherein the cleaning member is electrically grounded.

9. (Currently Amended) A method of producing an optical fiber as defined in ~~any one of claims 1 through 8~~ claim 5, wherein the optical fiber is passed through the cleaning member prior to detection of uneven spots on the optical fiber.

10. (Currently Amended) A method of producing an optical fiber as defined in ~~any one of claims 1 through 8~~ claim 5, wherein the optical fiber is passed through the cleaning member prior to coloring of the optical fiber.

11. (Original) A method of producing an optical fiber as defined in claim 10, wherein after the optical fiber is passed through the cleaning member, the optical fiber is taken up on a reel and then is subjected to coloring.

12 - 16 (Cancelled).

17. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for cleaning an optical fiber ~~as defined in claim 16, wherein~~ comprising:

a cleaning member disposed on an optical fiber longitudinal moving path for physical contact with a surface of a moving optical fiber for cleaning the surface thereof, and

means for holding the cleaning member ~~is held~~ so that [[the]] a contact portion of the cleaning member is movable [[to a]] in a direction perpendicular to the longitudinal moving path ~~position of normally moving optical fiber~~ by the movement of the optical fiber.

18. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for cleaning an optical fiber as defined in claim [[16]] 17, wherein the cleaning member is elongated due to friction between the cleaning member and the optical fiber so that the contact portion of the cleaning member and the optical fiber ~~is~~ are movable in a moving direction of the optical fiber.

19. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for cleaning an optical fiber as defined in claim [[16]] 17, wherein the cleaning member is held to ~~have such a~~ to provide sufficient slack in the cleaning member that the contact portion which is in a contact with the optical fiber is movable in ~~a moving~~ the longitudinal direction and radial direction of the optical fiber due to the movement of the optical fiber.